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Education, Energy, and
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Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

**SB 244 – Correctional Officers’ Retirement System – Special Death Benefits - Applicability
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza**

Thank you, Chair Jackson, and members of the distinguished Senate Budget and Taxation Pension Subcommittee for allowing me to present Senate Bill 244 – Correctional Officers’ Retirement System – Special Death Benefits – Applicability.

Last year, Senate Bill 198 passed unanimously out of both chambers and was signed into law by Governor Hogan. That bill ensured that a death benefit of \$125,000 would be paid to the surviving spouse, child, dependent parent, or estate of a public safety officer who was killed as a result of their job responsibilities and duties. Senate Bill 198 also established a timeline; the application for the special death benefits must be submitted for approval within three years that the evidence is found that the decedent was killed because of their job.

The bill before you, Senate Bill 244, has been specifically, narrowly crafted to enable one of my constituents to apply for these very special death benefits. Lena Williams, who will go into further detail in her own testimony, is the widow of Correctional Officer Gregory Collins who was shot and killed by a gang member in June, 2001. At that time, Ms. Williams received a general death benefit.

Under SB 198, Ms. Williams would have been eligible for a special death benefit except that Officer Collins died before January 1, 2006. This bill simply allows her to receive an adjusted special death benefit.

Working with Maryland Retirement and Pension Systems Legislative Director Anne Gawthrop on this customized bill, Senate Bill 244 specifically narrows the applicability of the special death benefits to Lena Williams’ special circumstances. The bill will only be in effect for six months, from June 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023, allowing Lena Williams time to apply for these benefits.

Mr. Chair and members of the Pensions Subcommittee, Lena Williams and her family have suffered from the brutal murder of her husband, Correctional Officer Greg Collins who served our State with honor in a dangerous job and ended up making the ultimate sacrifice.

We have an obligation to Ms. Williams and her family to ensure that this special death benefit is available to this family.

I truly appreciate your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully ask for a swift and favorable report on SB 244.